

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PC-04 CU-04 OS-03 NEA-10 EUR-25 CIAE-00

COME-00 EB-11 INR-10 LAB-06 NSAE-00 RSC-01 SIL-01

SCS-03 AID-20 CCO-00 FBO-01 PM-07 H-03 L-03 NIC-01

NSC-10 SPC-03 OC-06 OPR-02 PA-04 USSS-00 PRS-01

SCA-01 A-01 OMB-01 SS-20 SY-10 SAM-01 DODE-00 NSCE-00

SSO-00 USIE-00 DRC-01 /193 W
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P R 211213Z FEB 74

FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7717

INFO AMCONSUL ASMARA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS ELAB SGEN ET

SUBJECT: DETERIORATION OF PUBLIC ORDER AND CONFIDENCE

REF: ADDIS 1834

1. SUMMARY: SOCIAL AND LABOR UNREST HAS INCREASED IN PAST FEW DAYS. URBAN CONCERN ABOUT ORDER AND IEG'S ABILITY COPE WITH SITUATION DEEPENING. SCHOOLS CLOSED, PUBLIC TRANSPORT HAS CEASED, SPORADIC DESTRUCTION BY CROWDS CONTINUES. RUMORS ABOUND THAT DISCONTENT IN MILITARY, POLICE AND LABOR SETTING STAGE FOR MAJOR CHANGES. THIS REPORT UPDATES REFTEL AND DESCRIBES SOME ASPECTS OF FLUID AND UNSETTLED SITUATION. CONGEN WILL REPORT SEPARATELY ON SITUATION IN ASMARA WHICH WE UNDERSTAND NOT AS SERIOUS AS IN ADDIS.

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2. SCHOOLS: ON FEBRUARY 18 TEACHERS WENT ON STRIKE OVER EDUCATION SECTOR REVIEW (ESR) ISSUES (SEE REFTTEL). FROM SCATTERED REPORTS AROUND COUNTRY, IT APPEARS ALL JUNIOR HIGH AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS CLOSED. MOST PRIVATE SCHOOLS, INCLUDING AMERICAN SCHOOL, ALSO CLOSED DUE GENERAL INSECURITY. STUDENTS IN MANY PARTS COUNTRY, E.G., ADDIS, NAZARETH, JIMMA, DEBRE ZEIT, REPORTED BE DEMONSTRATING AND THROWING STONES IN SYMPATHY WITH TEACHERS, AIR FORCE AND OTHER DISCONTENTED SEGMENTS POPULATION. HSIU STUDENTS BOYCOTTING UNIVERSITY. STUDENTS AND OTHERS IN RURAL TOWNS ALONG MAIN ROADS FROM ADDIS ALSO SEEN DEMONSTRATING AND HAMPERING TRAFFIC.

3. TAXI DRIVERS STRUCK ON FEBRUARY 19. BUSES STOPPED MOVING ON FEBRUARY 20 BECAUSE THEY TAKING HEAVY BEATING FROM STONE-THROWING YOUNGSTERS. CESSATION PUBLIC TRANSPORT COMBINED WITH GENERAL UNEASINESS HAS INCREASED ABSENTEEISM AT GOVERNMENT AND OTHER OFFICES. WIDESPREAD RUMORS OF PETROL STATIONS CLOSING IMMINENTLY CONTRIBUTING TO CONCERN AND RELATED RUN ON CONSUMABLES.

4. POLICE REACTION TO DEMONSTRATIONS MIXED. AT TIMES THEY DO NOT RESPOND, REPORTEDLY BECAUSE OF SERIOUS GRIEVANCES IN THEIR RANKS AND SYMPATHY WITH DEMONSTRATORS, AND ON SOME OCCASIONS THEY REACT BRUTALLY. IT RELIABLY SAID THAT FOUR STUDENTS KILLED LATE LAST WEEK IN ADDIS AND THERE SOME REPORTS THAT FIVE KILLED YESTERDAY. FEWER POLICE IN EVIDENCE FEBRUARY 21 BUT AT SAME TIME THERE NUMEROUS REPORTS HARASSMENT OF PUBLIC AND ARREST OF STUDENTS. DUE INADEQUATE PROTECTION AND FEAR OF LOOTING, MANY SHOPS CLOSING DOWN.

5. SEVERAL SOURCES REPORT SOME MILITARY UNITS ALERTED WITH INTERMITTENT INCREASED PROTECTION OF FUEL DEPOT, AIRPORT, ETC. EMERGENCY MEETINGS OF RANKING MILITARY OFFICERS IN AREA CURRENTLY IN SESSION. COUNCIL OF MINISTERS ALSO MEETING ON EMERGENCY BASIS. EVIDENCE OF SERIOUS DISCONTENT, NOTABLY WITHIN MILITARY, QUITE NATURALLY FUELING RUMORS OF POSSIBLE COUP ATTEMPTS.

6. AS OF FEBRUARY 21. BANDS OF YOUTH, SOMETIMES JOINED BY ADULTS, ROAMING ADDIS STREETS AND SPORADICALLY DAMAGING VEHICLES AND BUILDINGS. (NOTE - SOME EMBASSY AND MAAG VEHICLES CONTINUE BE HIT BY ROCKS.) GUNFIRE HEARD FROM TIME TO TIME. EVENING OF FEBRUARY 20 THERE WERE LARGE UNRULY CROWDS IN DEBRE ZEIT AND NAZ- LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ARETH, WHERE ESR-RELATED DEMONSTRATIONS INCLUDED DISTINCT ANTI-US OVERTONES.

7. ELEMENTS EDUCATED ELITE AND OTHER CRITICS, INCLUDING MILITARY, OF REGIME EXPRESSING SOME SATISFACTION THAT DEEP DISCONTENT FINALLY BEING TANGIBLY DEMONSTRATED AND THAT PRESSURES CONTINUE MOUNT ON IEG TO TACKLE KEY PROBLEMS AND PRODUCE MEANINGFUL DECISIONS. SENIOR OFFICIALS EXPRESSING CONCERN, LOOKING TO EMPEROR

FOR GUIDANCE AND VOICING SKEPTICISM ON IEG'S CAPABILITY TAKE
NECESSARY TIMELY ACTION. URBAN PUBLIC ALSO DOUBTFUL THAT IEG CAN
OR WILL RESOLVE PROBLEMS. MEDIA CARRYING NO RPT NO NEWS THESE
EVENTS.

8. AMERICANS BEING ADVISED KEEP OFF STREETS TO DEGREE POSSIBLE.
MAAG HAS EXCUSED PERSONNEL OTHER THAN SECTION CHIEFS UNTIL FURTHER
NOTICE. AMERICAN COMMUNITY SCHOOL CLOSED AT LEAST UNTIL FEBRUARY
25. THUS FAR, WE HAVE NO REPORTS OF ANY SERIOUS INJURIES TO AM-
ERICANS.

9. COMMENT: WHILE OBSERVERS AGREE SITUATION DETERIORATING AT
PRESENT, MUCH EVIDENTLY DEPENDS ON IEG'S DECISIONS, OR LACK THEREOF.
MISSION MAKING EVERY EFFORT KEEP ABREAST OF DEVELOPMENTS IN
CONFUSED AND FLUID ENVIRONMENT.
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